

DUXBURY BAY

The harbormaster's looking out for you

This is the first part of a look at the harbormaster's office in our continuing series of life on the water in Duxbury.

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MPG Newspapers

By land and by sea, the harbormaster and his team are there to keep a watchful eye on the waterways of Duxbury.

Don Beers, harbormaster for almost 30 years, is just one of the "Three Amigos," as he refers to them, who make up the department staff. He and his young, yet highly experienced officers, Executive Officer Jake Emerson and Endangered Species Officer (ESO) Mike Pfoor, keep the waterways of Duxbury safe.

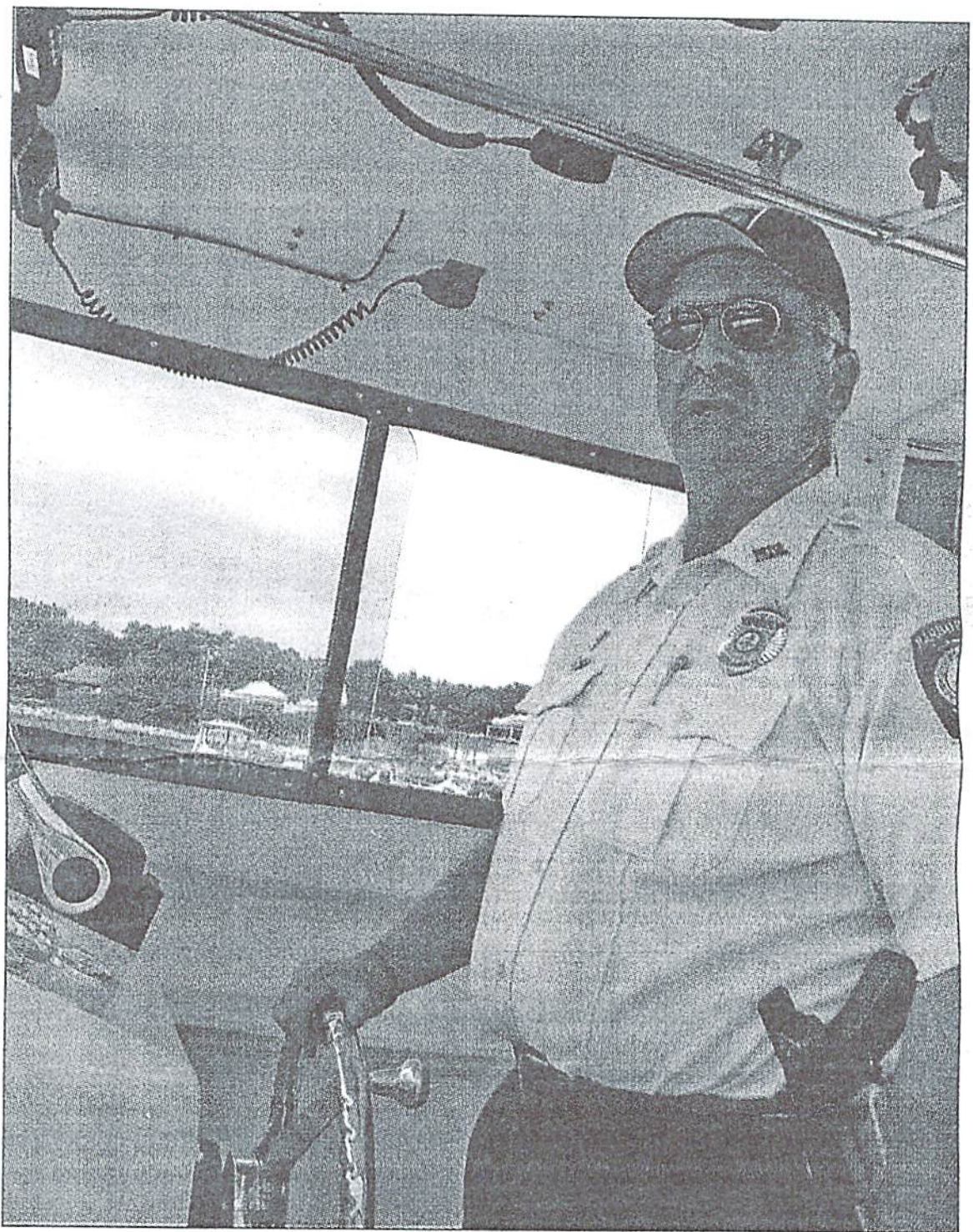
The department is divided into three divisions – Marine, Fish and Wildlife, and Beach. The Marine Division is the authority over the harbor, keeping the water and boaters safe. Fish and Wildlife keeps track of shellfishing beds and fishermen, as well as hunters and their prey. The Fish and Wildlife Department includes the Endangered Species Office. During the summer, the ESO is responsible for the welfare of the piping plovers, keeping an eye on their nests and their young.

Beach management includes all swimming, surfing and beach activities. This division requires the most staff and incorporates the highest volume of activity. This is also a jump-off point for many future harbormasters.

Beers says the most important part of his job is ensuring everyone is safe. He checks and rechecks the water and its access points, not to see if people are doing something wrong but to make sure everything is OK.

If a shellfisherman is out at low tide, the harbormasters will make sure he is back safely ashore by high tide. Beers says his job is not to be a warden but to keep people safe.

Approximately 9,000 people visit the beach in the summer on a hot weekend day. Duxbury possesses 32 miles of shoreline. Sixteen landings offering access to the water by boat, or beach. There are 18 square miles of waterways, including three that make up Duxbury Bay. And all is monitored by the Harbormaster's Department.



Staff photo/Andria Farrell

Harbormaster Don Beers patrols Duxbury Bay Monday afternoon.

"Every week, one of the three of us is on call. If on call, you can't be more than a 15-minute ride from the center of operation," Beers said. "Really, there are two of us on call. One backup for the guy on duty and one

backup for the guy on call."

The staff schedule runs congruently with the baseball season, starting the end of April/beginning of May, and ending the first week of October. Although Beers is an avid Red Sox fan, the closest he can get to a game is his

The Harbormaster Department works closely with police and fire departments, Beers said. Many former executive officers have gone into law enforcement.

"I consider myself an arm of the

police and fire departments," Beers said. "We rely on each other."

Beers can be patrolling the harbor, driving around to every landing on shellfish patrol, doing beach patrol or staffing the headquarters, depending on the day.

"There are no specialized jobs," he said.

Beers and his staff rely on each other and all work for one common goal – what Beers refers to as HVP, high visibility on patrol. At any given time, whether patrolling by land,

water or beach, they are constantly keeping an eye on all of their surroundings.

On shellfish patrol, Beers sits in his truck with windows cracked, air conditioner blasting, cell phone mounted on the dash and radio waves open. The black truck is equipped with three different radio systems, keeping him in constant communication with the harbormaster's shack, the ESO and any other staff members on duty.

His back seat has been permanently

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On patrol

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collapsed to provide a comfortable seat for his right-hand woman, Amber – his Alaskan malamute that he lovingly refers to as a Duxbury malamute. The back window is stained in drool and the makeshift seat is covered in white fur. Her nose is firmly pressed against the window-pane as she breathes in the fresh air from outside and scours with Beers the landing points, making sure all is well among the shellfishermen.

From different points Beers is able to see two or more landings, keep an eye on beach-goers, and take a peak at the activity out on the water. He notes the different activities on a clip board for the next patrol run later in the day. Beers says it's important to keep track of the activity to ensure that every shellfisherman and boat in the water returns safely.

"We work very hard to provide safety," Beers said. "We can't ever lose sight of what we are doing in our job."

During the second part of his day, Beers heads out on the water in the harbormaster's boat. Equipped with a radar system and a GPS (global positioning system) unit, the boat provides quick and accurate access to any point on the water. The small screen provides a clear image of surrounding land, water depths and direction of movement.

The GPS makes night navigation a much more accessible and manageable task with point-to-point navigation and water-depth information. Combined with a radar system that detects moving objects, search and rescue is made more concise.



STAFF PHOTO/ANDRIA FARRELL

Don's favorite gal, Amber, the world's only Duxbury malamute, has become the mascot to the harbormaster crew.

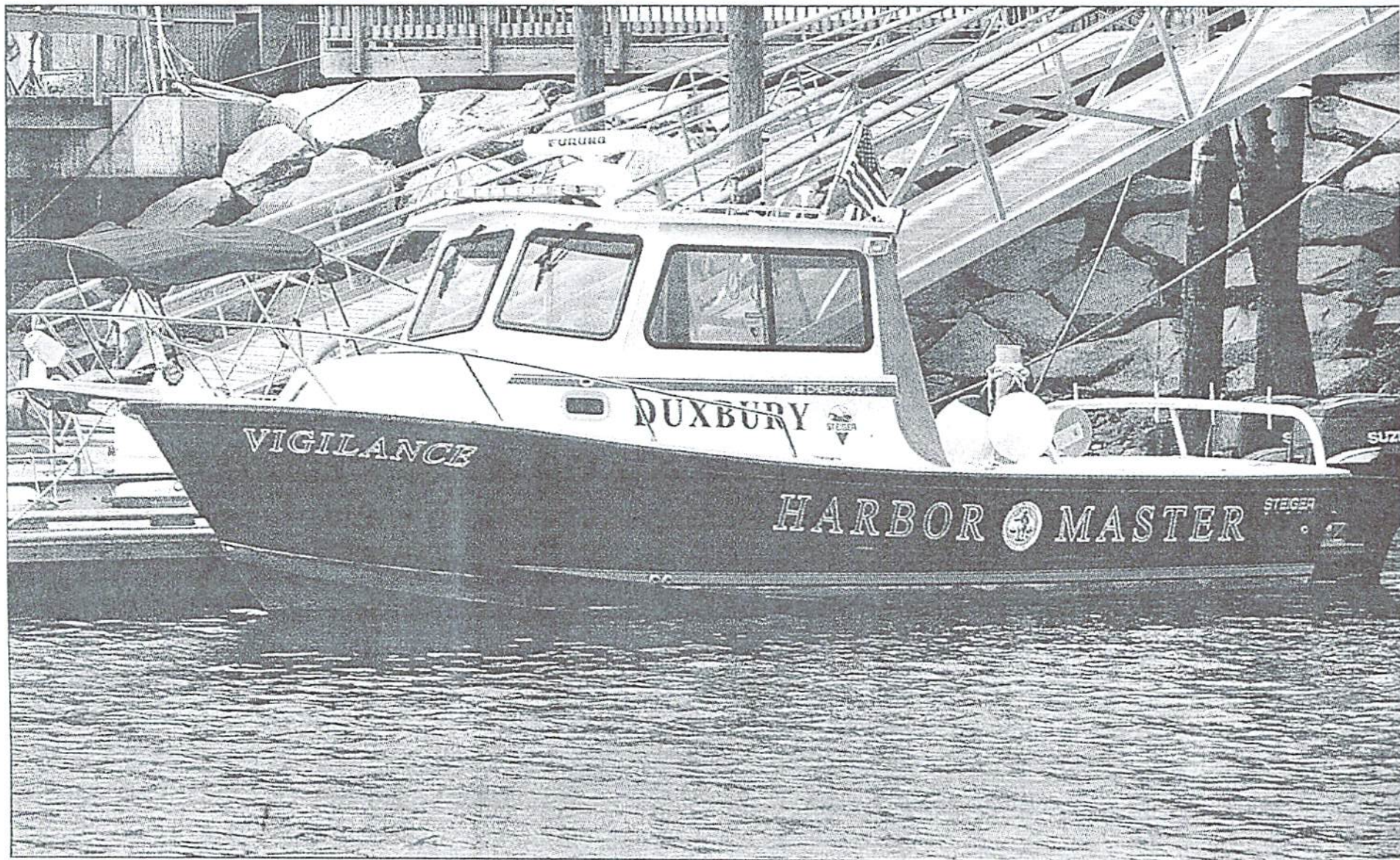
The boat, which was purchased last year, features state-of-the-art technology. Its comfy digs provide the harbormaster with a smooth ride. With Amber by his side, sunglasses fitted to his face and a cool breeze flowing through the slightly open window, Beers patrols the water with ease.

He describes his job as "30 years of joy." He says his job is 80 percent stewardship and 20 percent education. In his almost 30 years on the job, he has trained many ESOs and executive officers and, in doing so, has prepared many for various positions in law enforcement.

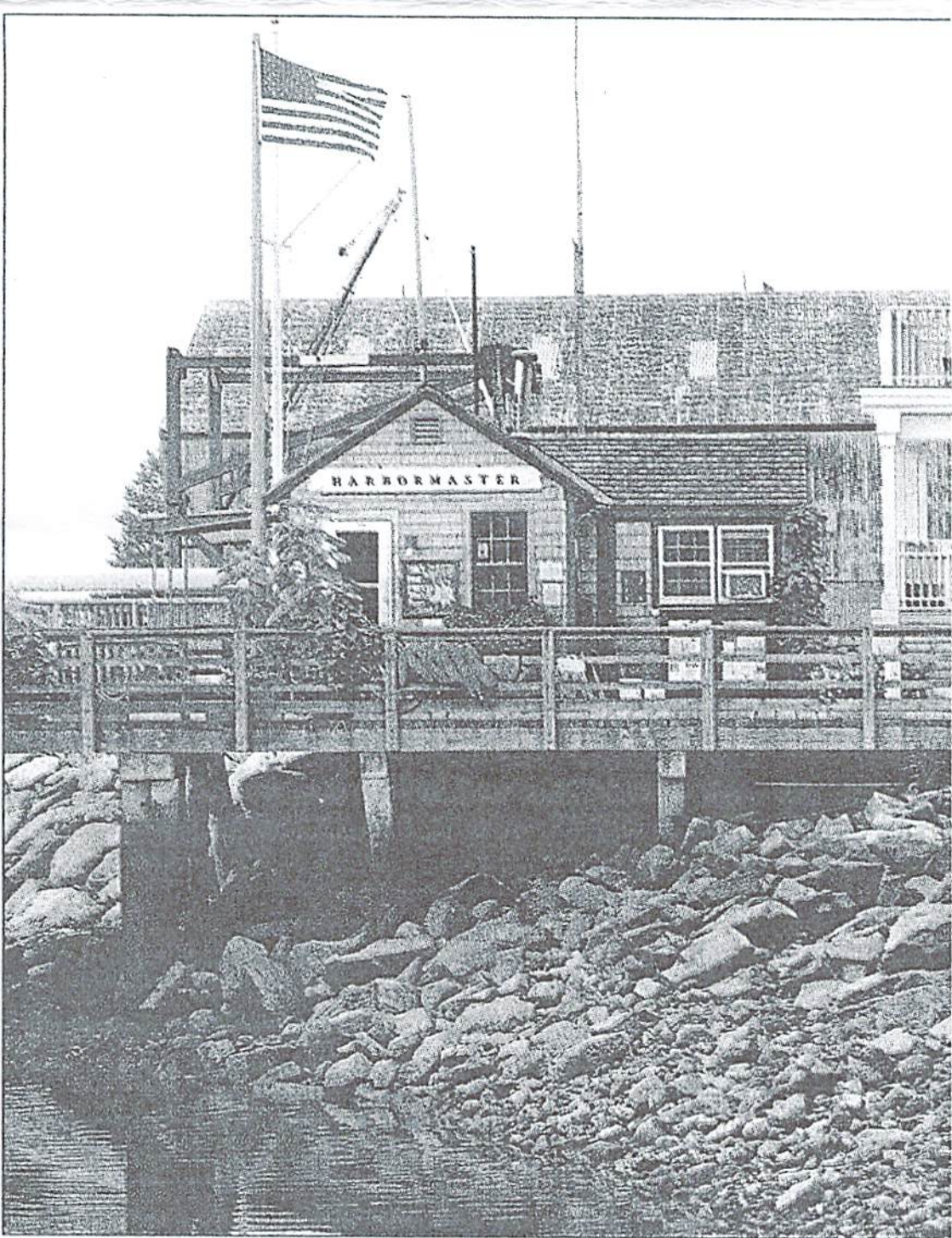
Harbormaster is more than just a job and a title – to Beers, it is his life.

NEWS

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The harbormaster's patrol boat, *Vigilance*, sits tied to the dock.



STAFF PHOTO/WESLEY EN

The harbormaster's office is a familiar site to those who work and play in Duxbury Harbor.